



## Addiction Medicine

**F**or many years *The Western Journal of Medicine* has had an occasional special issue—usually one each year—on a subject that was deemed at the time to be of growing importance to physicians in medical practice and in their day-to-day care of patients. Previous special issues have addressed clinical nutrition, cost of care, geriatrics, occupational and environmental medicine, cross-cultural medicine, personal health maintenance, high-tech medicine, medical informatics, AIDS from a global perspective, and, most recently, women and medicine. Each topic represented a new major force that, in the opinion of the editors, would influence and change the content or practice of medicine in the years immediately ahead. This year it is clear that chemical dependency and drug addiction are already meeting these criteria. It is also clear that chemical dependency and drug addiction are beginning to affect nearly every physician's practice, yet many physicians, by reason of their training and experience, are not as well-informed about addiction medicine as their practice needs might warrant.

Having decided that a special issue covering various aspects of what is coming to be known as addiction medicine might be informative and useful to our readers, the editors approached Dr David Smith and were able to persuade this very dedicated and very busy physician to be the editor for this special issue on Addiction Medicine. Dr Smith has devoted his professional career to the study and treatment of drug dependency and drug addiction. He founded the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic in 1967 when this district of San Francisco became the gathering place for "flower children" from all over the nation, many of whom soon suffered ill effects from the psychedelic drugs they were wont to use. Although the "flower children" have long since faded, drug abuse has not, and Dr Smith and the Haight Ashbury Free Clinic have continued to be at the cutting edge of our growing experience with what has now become a national and international scourge of drug addiction.

The editors are grateful to Dr Smith and his colleagues for their work in assembling this timely and very special issue on a topic that is beginning to touch almost every physician's life.

MSMW